A

SERMON

CONCERNING

Sins of Omission,

Preached before the

King and Queen

AT

WHITE-HALL,

ON

March 18th. 169¼. being *Midlent-Sunday.*

By the Right Reverend Father in GOD,
EDWARD, Lord Bishop of *Worcester.*

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A

S. JAMES IV. 17.

Therefore to him that knoweth to doe good, and doth it not, to him it is Sin.

ALthough our Apoſtle in this Epiſtle calls the Goſpel *the Law of Liberty*, yet to prevent any miſconſtruction thereof, as tho' it allowed *a Liberty to ſin*, we no where find more ſtrict and ſevere paſſages againſt it, than in this Epiſtle, both with Reſpect to *Sins of Commiſſion*, and *Sins of Omiſſion*. As to *Sins of Commiſſion*, his Expreſſion ſeems hardly conſiſtent with the Grace of the Goſpel; *For whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.* Hath the Law of *Moſes* any thing more apt to terrifie the Conſciences of Men, if not to drive them into deſpair, than this? It is not, *If one breaks the whole Law*; then it had been no wonder *if he were guilty of all*, even under the Goſpel, which doth not take away the force of the Moral Law. But, *If he keeps the whole Law; and yet offend in one Point; he is guilty of all.* How is this agreeable with the Equity of the Goſpel, to make a Breach of *one Part* to be a *violation* of the whole Law? Since he cannot keep the Law, and break it at the ſame

2. 12.

2. 10.

time; and ſo far as he did keep it, he could not be guilty of the breach of it; but, if *he offended but in one Point*, he muſt keep all the reſt. It is not enough to ſay, that the Chain of the whole is broken, and the Authority of the Law-giver contemned; for there is a great difference between breaking a Chain, and breaking it all to pieces; there is no ſuch Contempt in the Breach of one Command, as of all; and he that keeps all the reſt, ſeems to ſhew more regard to his Authority in keeping the other Parts of the Law, than Contempt in that wherein he offends. What then is the Apoſtles Meaning? It is, that the Goſpel doth not allow any wilfull Breach of the Law of God in any one kind or ſort whatſoever; as appears by the following words, *For he that ſaid, Do not commit Adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not kill; now if thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a Tranſgreſſor of the Law.* What is before ſaid, that *he is guilty of all*, is here explained, that *he is a Tranſgreſſor of the Law.* This cannot therefore be underſtood of any ſudden Act of Paſſion and Surpriſe, nor of any Failings as to the Manner of our Duties, but of a wilfull deliberate Practice of ſome one known Sin, although the Perſon may be carefull to avoid many others; Becauſe this is not conſiſtent with that Integrity of Mind, and that ſincere Regard to God and his

Laws,

Laws, which every good Chriſtian ought to have; and ſo being *guilty of the whole Law*, is to be underſtood with Reſpect to the Favour of God; which can no more be expected where there is a wilfull perſiſting in any one known Trangreſſion of the Law than if he were *guilty of all.*

As to *Sins of Omiſſion*; the words of the Text taken in their full Extent, have a very mortifying conſideration in them. For it is much eaſier *to know to doe good*, than to practiſe it. It is hard for Men under the plain Precepts of the Goſpel, not *to know how to doe good*; but who is there that can ſay, he *doth all the good he knows?* We all know, we ought *to love God with all our heart and ſoul and ſtrength*; *and our Neighbour as our ſelves*; yet who can pretend to doe it in the utmoſt latitude and extent of our Duty? So that what S. *Paul* ſaith of the Law, is true of the Text, that *it concludes all under Sin.* For, as our Apoſtle ſaith, *in many things we offend all.* And the more we know, the more we offend, as he tells us in theſe words, *To him that knoweth to doe good, and doth it not, to him it is ſin.* Gal. 3. 22. cli. 3. 2.

What Advantage then have we by the Goſpel, ſince the more we know of our Duty, the worſe our Condition is, if we do not practiſe it? And we know ſo much more to be our Duty than we can hope to practiſe; that this Expreſſion ſeems to leave

Mankind

Mankind in a more deplorable Condition under the Light of the Gospel, than if we had never heard of it. For, if the Sin be aggravated by *knowing* our Duty, and *not doing it*, it must proportionably be lessened by having no Opportunities to know it.

Therefore, for the Clearing the Sense of the Apostle in these words, and for the right understanding the just Measures of our Duty, and the due Aggravation of our Sins, it will be necessary to state and clear the Nature and Extent of *Sins of Omission*: Or to shew how far this Rule of the Apostle holds, *To him that knoweth to doe good, and doth it not, to him it is Sin.*

To doe good here, doth not barely imply something that is Lawfull and Commendable, which it is some way in our *Power* to doe; but that to which we are under some *Obligation*, so that it becomes *our Duty* to doe it. For a *Sin of Omission* must suppose an *Obligation*; since every *Sin* must be *a Transgression of the Law.* But there are several sorts of things that are *good*; and there are different kinds of *Obligation*; and from hence arises the Difficulty of stating the Nature of *Sins of Omission*; which some are too little sensible of, and some too much.

Omissio non est nisi boni debiti ad quod aliquis tenetur, Aqu. 2. 3. 79. 3. & 1. 2. 6. 3. Reginald. *Prox. l.* 15. *c.* 2. *n.* 10.

But it is in it self a Subject of so important a Nature, and so seldom spoken to, that I shall at this time

time endeavour to clear it. And in order thereto we muſt enquire,

I. Into that *Good* which we are obliged to do.

II. The Nature of the *Obligation* we are under to do it.

I. As to the *Good* which we are obliged to do; that may be conſidered two ways.

1. With Reſpect to God, and ſo it implies the Duty we Owe, on the account of the Relation we ſtand in to Him.

2. With Reſpect to one another; and ſo it implies not mere Duty but ſomething beneficial and advantageous to others, which we are in a *Capacity* to do.

1. Our Duty with Reſpect to God, is either

1. That of our Minds, which lie in Internal Acts, which we are bound to perform towards Him.

2. That which conſiſts in External Acts of Duty and Service to Him.

1. The Duty which we Owe to God in our Minds; which is, not barely to Know him, but frequently to Conſider and Think of him, as our Maker and Benefactor. It is a ſtrange Incogitancy in Mankind to live, as *without God in the World*; to ſuffer the Cares and Thoughts and Buſineſs of this World to Juſtle God out of our minds; whom we ought in the firſt place to Regard. If we could

could free our Minds from that Disorder and Confusion they are under by the strong Impressions of Sensible Objects, and the false Idea's of Imagination, they would think of Nothing so Freely, so Frequently, so Delightfully as the Divine Perfections. For God being the most Perfect Mind, other Minds that are created by him, do naturally tend towards him as their Centre, and are uneasie and restless, like the Needle touched with the Loadstone, till they are fixed towards him. We meet with too many things which divert and draw them another way; but it is certainly one of the most Necessary Duties lying upon us, to call back our Thoughts from too busie and eager a Pursuit of Earthly things; and to fix them in the serious Thoughts of God and another World.

1.2. Q. 89. 6. It is the Opinion of *Aquinas* and the older Casuists, that *assoon as ever any Person is come to the use of his Reason, he is not only bound to Think of God, but to Love him as his Chief Good; and that it is the most dangerous Sin of Omission not to doe it.*

Victor. *Rel.* 13. Navarr. *Man. c.* 11. *n.* 7. Tolet. *Sum. l.* 4. *c.* 9. Azor. T. 1. *l.* 9. *c.* 4. Gr. *de* Valent. To. 2. *Disp.* 6. *Qu.* 19. To. 3. *Dis.* 3 *Qu.* 19.

The latter Casuists, who think this Doctrine too severe, as to the *first use of Reason*; yet cannot deny it to hold, *assoon as any come to the Knowledge of God*; if the want of knowing him be not through their own Fault. Assoon as they know God, they confess, that they are bound to Love him; but are they

they not bound to Know him aſſoon as they are capable? What allowance may be made in the caſes of Groſs Ignorance, or Natural Stupidity we are not concerned to enquire; but we now ſpeak of thoſe who have all Advantages and Opportunities of knowing God betimes; and as to ſuch their Ignorance is ſo far from being an Excuſe, that it is their Sin. And that can never Excuſe from a Fault, but when it is no Fault to be Ignorant.

But, *Not to know God* when Perſons know ſo many other things in the World beſides him, is ſo much greater a Fault; becauſe all thoſe other things lead them to the Knowledge of Him. So that I take it for granted, that no man of Underſtanding can avoid the Knowledge of God, without ſhutting his Eye againſt the Cleareſt Light; without darkening his Underſtanding by Unreaſonable Prejudices; without Confuſion of Thought, and Perplexity of Mind; without Groundleſs Imaginations, and Ridiculous Suppoſitions; and moſt commonly not without very Diſorderly Paſſions and Vicious Habits, which make the very Thoughts of God uneaſy to his Mind.

But ſuppoſe we do Own and Believe a God, are we bound always to be Thinking of Him? Muſt we ſpend our time in Contemplation of Him, and neglect all our Affairs here? If not, what are the

bounds of our Duty which we may not omit without Sin?

There are two things which are neceſſary for us to doe with Reſpect to God in our Minds.

1. To have frequent and ſerious Thoughts of him; without which it will be impoſſible to keep our Minds in that Temper which they ought to be in. For the Thoughts of God keep up a vigorous Senſe of Religion, Inflame our Devotion, Calm our Paſſions, and are the moſt Powerfull Check againſt the Force of Temptations. And therefore we ought to allow our ſelves fit Times of Retirement for Recollection and Conſideration; wherein we draw in our Thoughts from the Buſineſs and Impertinencies of this Life (and even theſe go a great way in that which looks like Buſineſs), that we may converſe with God and our own Minds. And thoſe who do not ſometimes withdraw from the Noiſe and Hurry, the Duſt and Confuſion of this World, muſt be great Strangers both to God and themſelves; and mind any thing rather than their Chiefeſt Intereſt. But I am afraid there are too many among us, of whom the Pſalmiſt's words
Pſal. 10.4. are too true, *God is not in all their thoughts*; I wiſh there were not ſome who would make good another Reading of thoſe words, *viz. All their thoughts are there is no God.* But I think not ſo much their deliberate

deliberate *Thoughts*, as their *Wiſhes* and *Deſires*. But thoſe can never alter the Nature of things; and therefore the wiſeſt thing they can doe, is to make the Thoughts of God deſirable to them; and that can be only by Reconciling themſelves to him by a hearty and ſincere Repentance.

2. We are always bound to have an habitual Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind towards God. This is that which is commonly called the *Love of God*; and is oppoſed to the *Love of Sin*. Which doth not conſiſt in ſudden and tranſient Acts of Complacency and Delight in him; but in a firm Purpoſe and Reſolution of Mind to obey him. The *Jews* think, that the Fundamental Precept of the Law as to the *Love of God with all their heart and ſoul and ſtrength*, goes no farther than that they ſhould doe that which the Law requires as to the Worſhip and Service of God. But certainly the Love of God muſt go deeper, and riſe higher, or elſe it will never come up to the great Deſign of Religion; which is, not only to doe thoſe outward Acts of Service which he commands and expects from us; but to bring our Souls nearer to him, to make him our Chief End; and to direct the Courſe of our Lives and the Acts of our Obedience in order to it. Deut. 6. 5. 10. 12.

Now this is a Duty towards God ſo neceſſary to our Happineſs, that we muſt be always obliged to it, and at all times; although it be an *Affirmative Precept*. For the true Reaſon of the Difference of Obligation is from the *Nature* of the *Commands*, and not from the *Manner* of *Expreſſing* them either *Negatively* or *Affirmatively*. The Reaſon of the perpetual Obligation of *Negative* Precepts is, that it can never be lawfull to doe what God forbids; but it may be ſometimes lawfull to omit what he requires; becauſe the Circumſtances may make it not to be a Duty at that time. But when an *Affirmative* Precept is of that nature that no Circumſtances can alter the Obligation of it, then it binds as much as a *Negative*. And ſo it is as to the Command of true Repentance, and turning from the Love of Sin, to the Love of God; for no Man can be in ſuch Circumſtances wherein he is not bound to doe it.

But as to particular Acts of Repentance and of the Love of God, ſuppoſing that habitual Temper, the Obligation of them is according to the proper Seaſons and Occaſions of them. When a Sinner is conſcious to himſelf of freſh Acts of Sin, he is bound to renew his Repentance, and the Omiſſion of it adds to his Guilt; and when God calls Men to Repentance in a more than ordinary manner,

ner, by ſtrong Convictions of Conſcience; or ſome awakening Providence; or by ſome ſolemn Times of Faſting; he is guilty of a farther Aggravation of his Sin, if he neglects thoſe Seaſons of performing the proper Acts of Repentance.

But ſuppoſe we do know God, and have this habitual Love to him as our Chief End, doth this come up to all that Mankind owes to God? Do we know him and love him and ſerve him as we ought to doe? Do we not fail in the Manner and Degree of thoſe very Duties which we in ſome meaſure perform? And are not theſe Failings Omiſſions? And will not theſe Omiſſions be charged upon us as Sins? How then can Mankind hope to eſcape the Wrath of God againſt thoſe who continue in the Practice of Sin?

To anſwer this, we muſt diſtinguiſh between *Omiſſion* as a *Defect* and as a *Wilfull Sin.* We muſt ſay, as S. *James* doth, *In many things we offend all*; and in all things, I am afraid, we offend ſome way or other; *if God would be exact to mark what is done amiſs.* But here lies the main Point as to this Matter, How far God will charge thoſe things upon us as Omiſſions, which in us come rather from want of *Power* than of *Will* to doe them? I do not mean of *Natural Faculties*, for thoſe we have entire, but of *Moral Power, i.e.* of ſuch a Meaſure of James 3. 2.

Divine

Divine Grace as will enable us to doe things beyond the Imperfection and Infirmity of our preſent ſtate; which, in this fallen Condition, is like that of a Man under a Dead-Palſie, who hath all the Parts of a Man, but not the Power of Moving them. And where God by his Grace doth recover Mankind to a New Life, yet there are ſuch Remainders of the former Deadneſs upon us, as makes us unable to doe that which we moſt deſire to doe; and do fail in the manner of Performance, where we are ſincere as to our Purpoſe and Deſign. But will God lay theſe Moral Defects, or Infirmities of our corrupt Nature on us as wilfull Sins now under the Goſpel? God forbid. I do not queſtion God's Right to command us all that which is juſt in it ſelf, and he hath given us Faculties to doe; but I conſider him as a gracious Lord towards a decayed Tenant, of whom, if he be willing to pay what he is able, *he will not exact the uttermoſt farthing*; As a compaſſionate Commander to a wounded Soldier, who is willing to accept what Service he is able to doe, although he fails in many Points of his Duty; As the good *Samaritan*, which poured in *Wine and Oil* into the Wounds which he had not made; and diſcharged *the Debt* which he had not contracted. If God were not infinitely Gracious and Mercifull, there were little

hopes

hopes for us to avoid Puniſhment; but ſince he is pleaſed to deal with us upon the Terms of a New Covenant, we have reaſon to hope that he will not charge *Involuntary Neglects* and *Moral Diſabilities* upon us, as *Sins of Omiſſion.*

2. There are *Duties* of *External Worſhip and Service* owing to God; and how ſhall we know when the *Omiſſion* of theſe becomes a Sin to us? For theſe are not always neceſſary, and ſometimes we may be hindred from them.

To anſwer this, I lay down theſe Rules;

I. A Conſtant or Habitual Neglect of thoſe Duties which God hath appointed for his Worſhip and Service, cannot be without a Sin of Omiſſion; becauſe, that muſt ariſe from an evil Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind. When it comes from a Contempt of God and his Service, it muſt be a Sin, becauſe the Reaſon of it is a very great one. When it comes barely from a Careleſs, Indifferent, Slothfull Temper, which is glad of any Excuſes for the Neglect or Omiſſion of them; it argues very little Senſe of Religion, or Regard to God and his Service, when they are ſo ready to find an Excuſe for their Fault.

But ſome are ready to juſtifie themſelves in ſuch a Neglect, as though all the outward Worſhip of God were mere Ceremony, and only a Decent way

way of entertaining the People with ſome outward Pomp and Shew of Devotion towards a *Divine Majeſty*.

I am afraid, ſuch hardly mention a *Divine Majeſty*, but in a Complement; however, we are willing to believe that they do own ſuch a *Being*, but they think it a vain thing to ſerve him; as though he could be moved by our Prayers to him, or Praiſes of him. We do not deny that God is Infinitely above all our Services: but is that a Reaſon why we ſhould not ſerve him in the Way he requires it from us? He doth not want our Services, but we want his Favour and Bleſſings; and can we expect them, when we ſlight that little Service, in Compariſon of the time he allows for other Imployments, which he expects from us? If we had nothing but the Light of Nature to direct us, we ſhould conclude it very reaſonable that Mankind ſhould own their Creator, by ſome Outward, and Publick, and Stated Ways and Times of Worſhip. For this is no more than natural Juſtice to own our Maker and Benefactor; and can it become leſs neceſſary, when he hath declared himſelf pleaſed with the Performance of them, and made great Promiſes to thoſe who call upon him?

But this, ſay they, is the greateſt Difficulty of all, to underſtand what Effect our Prayers can have

upon

upon the Eternal Counsels of Heaven; since they are already fixed and cannot be Reversed by our Prayers.

As great as this Difficulty is, the true Point of it is only this; Whether we are to Believe and Trust the frequent and repeated Promises of God, although we are not able to comprehend, how the Efficacy of our Prayers is taken in, as a necessary Condition towards the Execution of God's Eternal Purposes. For, if they are Conditions, as the Scripture often tells us; then we may easily understand what is meant by the Efficacy of Prayers; and as to the manner of Reconciling such contingent Conditions with God's Eternal Purposes; it is a Difficulty which will afford perpetual Matter of Dispute, but ought no more to hinder us from plain Duties, than a Man should be from going a necessary Journey, till he be satisfied whether the Earth moves about the Sun, or the Sun about the Earth.

II. Whether the Omission of such publick Duties of Divine Worship be a Sin or not, depends very much on the *Reason and Occasion* of it. For if it be a Wilfull Neglect, it doth imply a Degree of Contempt, and that cannot be without Sin. And that is a Wilfull Neglect, when nothing but an Act of a Man's own Will hinders him from serving

God in Publick: I do not mean only at the very time, but if he hath by ſome former Act of his Will brought an Incapacity upon himſelf, that want of Power doth not Excuſe, when the Impotency ariſes from a Voluntary Act of his own. If it be intended on Purpoſe to hinder, it is as wilfull in its Cauſe, as if there were no ſuch Impediment. For, although the Actual Impediment be the immediate Cauſe of the Omiſſion; yet it is the Deſign and Purpoſe which makes it Wilfull. But if Perſons by an Act of Providence without their own Fault be hindred from the Worſhip of God as by long Sickneſs; no one can ſay, that this Omiſſion is Wilfull, and therefore cannot be accounted a Sin. But if a Perſon by his Intemperance and Debauchery hath brought himſelf into an Incapacity of attending on the Service of God; we cannot ſay that the Actual Omiſſion was Wilfull; but we may juſtly ſay, that the Original Cauſe was ſo; and that it cannot excuſe the Omiſſion.

II. But beſides the Duties which we Owe to God, there are ſuch which we Owe to one another, which cannot be omitted without Sin. But here the ſtating of the Caſe ſeems yet more difficult, ſince there is not ſo plain an Authority to Oblige; nor ſuch a Relation to each other, as we ſtand in to God. And beſides the Circumſtances of Humane

Affairs

Affairs are oftentimes ſo intricate and perplexed, that it is very hard for Perſons to know their Duties, and much more to practice them.

But there are certainly ſuch Duties, which we owe both *to the Publick and to one another*; and it may be of ſome Uſe to us to underſtand the force of the Obligation, and what thoſe are which cannot be *Omitted* without *Sin*.

1. *As to the Publick*; and concerning that, we may take Notice of two Rules;

1. Thoſe Duties cannot be omitted without Sin, which cannot be omitted without Prejudice to the Publick Good. By which I do not mean any Fancyfull Notions, or Pretences to it, but the true and real Publick Intereſt of the Nation; which conſiſts in the Preſervation of our Religion and Laws. The main Duty of this kind, which I ſhall inſiſt upon, is the laying aſide all Heats and Animoſities and Diſtinctions of Parties, and minding and carrying on that which is the undoubted Common Intereſt of us all. What is the Meaning of all thoſe Jealouſies and Suſpicions which are among us, when we all profeſs to own the ſame Religion, the ſame Laws, and the ſame Government?

This is a very Melancholy Subject to ſpeak of; For this unſeaſonable Difference of Parties among our ſelves, is like a Flaming Meteor in the Air,

we can hardly keep our ſelves from looking upon it; and yet cannot behold it without ſome kind of Terror and Amazement. It is diſputed among the Caſuiſts, whether if a Man ſees two Men fighting with each other, he be bound to part them to his own Hazard; and the general Reſolution is, that if he be in a private Capacity he is not, but in a Publick he is. I hope the publick Capacity, I appear in here at this time, will excuſe my interpoſing to allay ſuch Heats and Animoſities as are not only of dangerous Conſequence, but great Sins. And therefore, unleſs I would be guilty of omitting a Duty my ſelf, I muſt (and will) lay open the Miſchief of ſuch divided Intereſts as the Difference of Parties carries along with them.

When God had given Children to *Rebekah*, while they were yet unborn, and in their Mother's Womb, ſhe found them ſtruggling within her to ſuch a degree as made her in a Conſternation to cry out, *If it be ſo, why am I thus? i. e.* If God hath given me theſe Children for Bleſſings, What is the meaning of this *ſtruggling* between them? And it is ſaid, Gen. 25. 22 her Concernment was ſo great, *that ſhe went to enquire of the Lord.* Some think that *Melchiſedek* was ſtill living at *Salem*, and that ſhe went to him, to conſult about the Conſequence of it; and he was a very proper Perſon for it; for he was *King of*

Righteouſneſs

Righteouſneſs and *King of Peace.* And thoſe are the beſt Antidotes againſt the Strugglings and Animoſities of thoſe who have the ſame common Intereſt and Obligations. We need not to conſult any Oracle in this Caſe; for S. *Paul* hath told us that, *if we bite and devour one another*; not like Canibals, but like different Parties, living in Hatred and Malice and Animoſity to each other; take heed, ſaith he, *that ye be not conſumed one of another.* As if he had ſaid, Things cannot always continue at this paſs, the inward Fires, if not ſuppreſſed, will break out at laſt, and in probability end in your mutual Deſtruction. Gal. 5. 15.

Nothing hath more puzzled the Wits of Men in this Inquiſitive Age, than to give an Account of the Ebbing and Flowing of the Sea; but a Great Man of our Nation hath told us, that we need not run to the Moon, or other remoter Cauſes; for the true Reaſon of it is nothing elſe but the claſhing of the Waters of two mighty Seas croſſing each other; and therefore, where there are no ſuch contrary Motions, there is no ſuch *Ebbing* and *Flowing.* We have too much of this *Ebbing* and *Flowing* upon Land, both as to our Condition and Expectation. But whence comes it? Is it not from two Parties among us croſſing and ſtriving to overtop and overpower each other? And till we unite and join in *Lord* Bacon *Impetus Philoſ.*

in the ſame common Current, we have little cauſe to hope for a ſtate of Peace and Tranquility. Our Saviour tells us, *a kingdom divided againſt it ſelf cannot ſtand.* I need not tell you of what Kingdom he ſpeaks; but it was ſuch a one, where there would be no Subtilty or Diligence wanting in the ſeveral Parties as to carrying on their Deſigns; but he looks on an united common Intereſt ſo neceſſary to the preſervation of Government, that he declares, that no kind of Society can be ſupported without it. If we then regard the Intereſt of our Nation or of our Religion; If we would avoid the Shame and Reproch of Deſtroying by our Diviſions, what we pretended *to value above our Lives*; we muſt lay aſide our mutual Jealouſies and Suſpicions; we muſt abate our Heats and Animoſities; we muſt unite and join in *the things that belong to our Peace.* But if *they be hid from our eyes*; then I am afraid what S. *Paul* ſaid of the *Goſpel* may be too truly applied to *the things of our Peace*; *If they be hid, they are hid to them that are loſt*; *in whom the God of this world hath blinded their eyes.* For it is too apparent, that the true Ground of the Contention of the ſeveral Parties, is not Matter of Conſcience or Religion, or the common Intereſt of the Nation, but about Power and Superiority over each other; which, if it be carried on, in humane

Mat. 12. 25.

Probabi-

Probability can end in nothing but mutual Deſtruction. Which God of his Mercy prevent.

II. Men cannot without Sin *omit* the doing thoſe Duties which their Places do require from them. For thoſe are intended for a publick Benefit.

Thoſe who *ſtudy to be quiet, and to doe their own* 1 Theſſ. 4. 11. *buſineſs*, are not only the beſt Chriſtians, but the beſt Inſtruments of the publick Good. Whereas, Men of turbulent, reſtleſs and ambitious Minds, who make abundance of Noiſe and Clamour, are like Waſps, always flying and buzzing about, and very angry and peeviſh and diſcontented; but are nothing ſo *uſefull* as the more ſilent and induſtrious Bees; which make the beſt of every thing, and ſerve the common Intereſt by it.

Every Society of Men is a Body made up of Head and Members knit and compacted together by Joints and Bands; but all have their ſeveral Uſes and Functions, and while theſe are duly performed, the whole is preſerved; but if the Feet ſhould mutiny againſt the other Parts, becauſe they bear the Burthen of the whole; or the Stomach, that it is loaded and oppreſſed with what ſerves for the Nouriſhment of all; or the Head, that it muſt direct and contrive and manage all; what would the Effect be of ſuch Complaints and Diſcontents at their own Share, but that the whole Body muſt

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ſuffer by them. While all the Materials of a Building are kept in their due Place and Order, the whole is ſtrengthened and ſupported; but if they ſtart out of their Places and tumble one upon another, the whole muſt fall.

There are always ſome who love to carry on their own Ends under Publick Pretences; and if thoſe be not attained, they matter not what becomes of all other Intereſts, although their own muſt ſuffer with the reſt. Theſe are like the Ivy to a flouriſhing Tree, which ſeems to embrace it and ſtick cloſe to it, but it is for its own advantage; but at the ſame time, it weakens it and hinders its Growth, and if it falls, it muſt periſh together with it.

But there are others, who by the very Duties of their Places are bound to regard the Publick and the Good of others; and when they do it not, they are certainly guilty of *Sins* of *Omiſſion* in a high Degree. For every ſuch place is a Truſt from God, of which an Account muſt be given; and a Sacred and Solemn Obligation goes along with them; ſo that there can be no Sins of Omiſſion in ſuch Caſes, without *Sins* of *Commiſſion* of as high a Nature as Breach of Truſt, and of the moſt ſolemn Obligations. The truth is, the World is ſo humourſome and fantaſtical a thing, that it will hardly endure to be made better; ſo that thoſe who have

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the greateſt Zeal and Reſolution to *do good*, are extremely diſcouraged in it, when they find ſo many Objections and Difficulties; ſuch frowardneſs and Perverſeneſs in ſome, ſuch Remiſſneſs and Coldneſs in others, ſuch an Univerſal *Laſſitude and Indifferency*, that it is enough to check the beſt Inclinations that way, and to make them leave the World to be managed as it will. And there are ſome *Seaſons* wherein it is much harder to *do Good* than in others. Such I mean, when Wickedneſs and Vice have corrupted the very Principles of Mens Minds; when they Account it a Piece of Wit to be Profane, and a higher ſort of Breeding to deſpiſe Religion and Vertue; when ſome are ready to pervert the beſt Deſigns, and mix ſuch Mean and Siniſter Ends of their own with them, and thereby blaſt them, that they come to nothing; when others will not endure that Good may be done, unleſs they may have the ſole doing of it, and endeavour to leſſen the Reputation of all who are *not altogether ſuch as themſelves*; When all imaginable Arts are uſed to make Government Contemptible; and the beſt Purpoſes ineffectual; Laſtly, when any who are bound to carry on the Publick Good, account it Wiſdom to do little or nothing in their Places, and take all poſſible Care to diſoblige no Body by doing their Duties, for

fear of evil Conſequences; I ſay, when ſuch Seaſons do happen, there is a very Melancholy Proſpect of Affairs, and little Hopes of *doing* or of *ſeeing Good.*

II. I now proceed to the *Good* which we are to do with Reſpect to others of the ſame Nature and in a worſe Condition than our ſelves; and therefore need our Help and Aſſiſtance. This is ſo remarkable a Senſe of *doing Good*, that it hath almoſt appropriated the Name to it ſelf; as *Good Works* are generally taken for Works of Charity. Theſe are ſuch, as all agree, that they cannot be wholly omitted without Sin; but the difficulty lies in ſtating the Meaſure and Seaſons of the Obligation to them. Concerning which, theſe Rules may be obſerved:

1. That the Meaſures of Duty in this Caſe are very different, according to the different Circumſtances and Conditions of Perſons. For, although the ſtanding General Rules of our Duty are fixed and unalterable; yet the particular Obligations depend upon great Variety of Circumſtances, as to thoſe who are to do and to receive Good. If the Eaſineſs of Perſons Conditions in the World will afford their laying by a conſtant Stock of Charity, it will be always in readineſs for ſuch Occaſions, when we would be more willing to doe Good if

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it were in our Power; but it is hardly poſſible to make ſuch Rules which may not give Occaſions for trouble to ſcrupulous Minds, when they do not ſtrictly obſerve them. But we are all ſo far bound to do Good to thoſe in Want, that the not doing it according to our Abilities and Opportunities, is ſuch a Sin of Omiſſion as is inconſiſtent with true Chriſtianity; but of thoſe, every Perſon is left to judge; but ſo, as he muſt give an Account of it at the Great Day. For, it is obſervable, that our Saviour ſpeaking of the Proceedings then, particularly mentions the *Sins* of *Omiſſion* with Reſpect to the doing Good to others. Matt. 25. 42.

2. There are particular Seaſons, when a greater Meaſure of *doing Good* is required than at others; *i. e.* When Perſons ſuffer for Religion and a good Conſcience; When the Neceſſities of People are more general and preſſing; When great Objects of Charity are certainly known to our ſelves and concealed from others; When a preſent Relief puts them into a way of *doing Good* for themſelves; When God hath *done Good* to us after a more remarkable manner than he hath to others; When we *do the more Good*, becauſe we have done ſo much Evil; and thereby manifeſt the Sincerity of our Repentance, by bringing forth ſuch Fruits worthy of Amendment of Life; When our Calling and

Profeſſion is to *do Good*; and we are bound to give the beſt Examples to others according to our Abilities; When our Religion ſuffers by not *doing Good*, and our Faith is queſtioned for want of *Good Works*; Laſtly, When there are no ſuch Natural Drains of Charity, as Children and near Relations which need our Aſſiſtance; in theſe and many other Inſtances of a like Nature, there is ſo much greater Obligation to the *doing Good*, that it cannot be Omitted without Sin.

II. I now come in the laſt Place, to conſider the *Nature* of the *Obligation* we lie under to do the Good we know. And the Reaſon of conſidering this, is from the Compariſon of ſeveral Duties with one another; for we may be bound to ſeveral things at the ſame time, but we cannot perform them together; and the Difficulty then is to underſtand, which of theſe Duties we may Omit without Sin.

And the Compariſon may be three-fold;

1. As to the Nature of the Duties.

2. As to the Authority which enjoyns them.

3. As to the particular Obligation we are under to do them.

1. As to the Nature of our Duties. For there are ſeveral kinds of things that are *Good*; and we are to have a different Regard to them. Some things are Good becauſe they are commanded; and

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ſome things are commanded, becauſe they are Good; and even God himſelf allows us to make a Difference between theſe, when himſelf ſaith, *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*; although he required both; but if it happens that both cannot be done, then he prefers the former, although his own Honour ſeems more concerned in the latter. Our Saviour extends this Rule to *Mercy* on the Souls of Men; and to *Mercy* on our Bodies, even out of the Caſe of urgent or extreme Neceſſity, which cannot be pleaded in the Apoſtles Caſe of *Plucking the Ears of Corn on the Sabbath day.* But from hence we have ground to infer, that when two Duties interfere with one another, we are bound to prefer the greater and more ſubſtantial Duty, and then the Omiſſion of the leſſer is no Sin.

Hoſ. 6. 6.

Matt. 9. 13.

12. 7.

2. As to the Authority which requires them. There is no queſtion, but when the Authority of God and Man do contradict each other, *God is to be obeyed rather than Man.* But the Authority of God's Command is not equally clear in all Caſes; for ſome things are required plainly and directly, and ſome things by conſequence and parity of Reaſon; ſome things are declared and enforced by the Goſpel, others left to our own Deductions and Inferences; ſome things are made poſitive Commands

mands for all Ages, others are reported by way of Example, but that Example underſtood by the Church to have the force of a Command; now, in all theſe and other like Caſes, we ought to have the greateſt regard to plain, poſitive, moral and perpetual Commands; but withall, to have a due regard to conſequential and uſefull Duties, eſpecially where the Church of God hath always ſo underſtood them, which is the beſt Interpreter of ſuch doubtfull Caſes, where the Senſe of it is truly delivered to us.

3. As to the *Obligation* we are under; and that is threefold. 1. That of *Nature*, which is, to act according to Reaſon; and none can queſtion that, but thoſe who queſtion, whether there be any ſuch Principle as Reaſon in Mankind; and whoſoever do ſo, have Reaſon to begin at home. 2. Of *Chriſtianity*, which ſuppoſes and enforces that of Nature, and ſuperadds many other Duties which we are bound to perform as Chriſtians. 3. Of our *Several Relations*, and particular *Imployments*. As to the former, we are under great Obligations from God and Nature and Chriſtianity, to doe the Duties which belong to us in them. As to the latter, they commonly require a ſtricter Obligation by Oath, to doe thoſe things which otherwiſe we are not bound to doe. But being entered into it

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by a voluntary Act of our own, we cannot omit ſuch Duties without Sin, but where the Circumſtances of things do ſuperſede the Obligation.

Thus I have gon through, as clearly and diſtinctly as I could, the moſt uſefull Caſes relating to *Sins of Omiſſion*; It remains now, that I make ſome *Application* to our ſelves.

When we reflect on our Lives and Actions, our *Sins of Commiſſion* are apt to terrifie our Conſciences, and make us very apprehenſive of the Wrath of God; but how few are any ways concerned for their *Sins of Omiſſion*, *viz.* For not diſcharging the Duties of their Places, for not doing the Good they might and ought to have done, for not ſerving God with Diligence and exemplary Devotion, for not having their Minds ſo fixed and intent upon him as they ought to have on their Creatour and Preſerver and Redeemer? In a very corrupt Age not to be remarkable for *doing Evil* is a kind of Saintſhip; but how few are remarkable for *doing Good?* and yet that is one of the beſt Characters of Saintſhip. How much time is ſquandred away in Vanity and Folly? and yet, how is that grudged which is ſpent in the Worſhip of God? O what a burthen it is to ſerve God, and ſpend any time in Devotion! How many Excuſes and Pretences of Buſineſs will ſuch make rather than attend upon

Religious

Religous Duties, which themſelves would judge very frivolous in other Matters! And will God and Conſcience be ſatisfied with ſuch unequal Dealing, ſuch notorious Partiality? Let us deal faithfully and ſincerely with our ſelves; Are we as ready to ſerve God as to ſerve our Luſts and Pleaſures? Have we the ſame regard to his Worſhip that we have to any thing we really love and eſteem?

If not, there muſt be ſomething very much amiſs in the Temper and Diſpoſition of the Mind; and we are highly concerned to look into it. I do not ſpeak now of *caſual* and *accidental Omiſſions* of ſome particular Duties at ſome times; but of a *general* Unconcernedneſs about Matters of Religion, as though they were either too high in the Speculation, or too mean and low in the Practice of them; or at leaſt, that it is no great Matter one way or other, whether they mind them or not. This, I am afraid, is too much the Temper of the Age we live in; which ſeems to be ſinking into a ſtrange *Indifferency* about Religion. It is poſſible for Perſons to have a Zeal againſt ſome corrupt Opinions and Practices in Religion; and yet to have no true Zeal or Concernment for Religion it ſelf. For they may ſo much hate being impoſed upon by falſe Pretenders, that carry on an

Intereſt

Intereſt and Faction, under the Shew of Religion, as from thence to ſuſpect all Religion to be nothing elſe; which is as unreaſonable, as for a Man to conclude, that all Merchants and Jewellers are Cheats, and that there are no ſuch things (nor can be) as true Diamonds in the World, becauſe he hath fallen into the hands of ſuch as would have cheated him with thoſe which were counterfeit. And it is common with ſuch who deſign to deceive, that what they want in *Sincerity*, they make up with *Confidence*. This is a good Argument for caution and looking about us; but it is none at all for our indifferency about Matters of Religion. For it is not here, as in Jewels, which are fine things to look upon; but the Happineſs of Life doth not depend upon them. But would any one let alone things neceſſary to the Support of Life, becauſe Poiſon may be put into them? We may take care to prevent it; but we muſt have the Neceſſaries of Life; and it would be great Folly to die for want of Suſtenance, for fear of being Poiſoned.

If we have no true Love to God and Religion, we muſt periſh; for there is no hopes of Salvation without it. And if we go on in a careleſs Indifferency about God and his Service; If we do not do our Endeavours for ſuppreſſing Wickedneſs

and Vice; If we do not mind Religion our ſelves, nor are incouraging it in others, it will ſhew that we have not that Love of God and Religion which we ought to have.

Therefore, if we regard the Honour of God, our own Salvation, the Duties of our Places, the Intereſt of the Nation, and the Satisfaction of all that are Wiſe and Good, we muſt ſhake off all this Coldneſs and Indifferency about Religion, and apply our ſelves heartily and ſincerely to promote the great Ends of it; which are, to make Perſons Good in this World, and Happy in another.

Which God of his Mercy grant, &c.

FINIS.

A Catalogue of ſome Books, publiſhed by the Right Reverend Father in God, EDWARD, *Lord Biſhop of* Worceſter: *And ſold by* Henry Mortlock, *at the* Phœnix *in St.* Paul's *Church-Yard.*

SErmons preached upon ſeveral Occaſions, with a Diſcourſe Annexed concerning the True Reaſon of the Sufferings of Chriſt; wherein *Crellius* his Anſwer to *Grotius* is conſider'd. In Fol.

The Reformation juſtified in a Sermon preached at *Guild-Hall* Chapel, *Sept.* 21. 1673. before the Lord Mayor, *&c.* upon *Acts* 24. 14.

A Sermon preached *Nov.* 5. 1673. at St. *Margarets Weſtminſter*, upon *Matt.* 7. 15, 16.

A Sermon preached before the King at *White-Hall*, *Feb.* 24. $167\frac{4}{5}$ upon *Heb.* 3. 13.

A Sermon preached on the Faſt-day, *Nov.* 13. 1678. at St. *Margarets Weſtminſter*, before the Honourable Houſe of Commons, upon 1 *Sam.* 12. 24, 25.

A Sermon preached before the King at *White-Hall*, *March* 7. $167\frac{8}{9}$ upon *Matt.* 10. 16.

The Miſchief of Separation, a Sermon preached at *Guild-Hall* Chapel, *May* 11. 1680. before the Lord Mayor, *&c.* upon *Phil.* 3. 16.

Proteſtant Charity, a Sermon preached at St. *Sepulchre's* Church on *Tueſday* in *Eaſter* Week, 1681. before the Lord Mayor, *&c.* upon *Gal.* 6. 9.

Of the nature of Superſtition, a Sermon preached at St. *Dunſtan's* Weſt, *March* 31. 1682. upon *Col.* 2. 23.

A Sermon preached before the King, *Feb.* 15. $168\frac{4}{5}$ upon *Job* 23. 15.

A Sermon preached at a publick Ordination at St. *Peter's Cornhill*, *March* 15. $168\frac{4}{5}$ upon 1 *Tim.* 5. 22.

A Sermon preached at *White-Hall*, *Feb.* 19. $168\frac{5}{6}$ being the firſt *Friday* in *Lent*, upon *Luke* 15. 18.

Scripture and Tradition compared, in a Sermon preached at *Guild-Hall* Chapel, *Nov.* 27. 1687. upon *Col.* 2. 16.

A Sermon preached before the Queen at *White-Hall*, *Feb.* 22. $168\frac{8}{9}$ upon 1 *Pet.* 4. 18.

A Sermon preached before the King and Queen at *White-Hall*, *March* 23. $16\frac{89}{90}$ upon *Eccleſ.* 11. 9.

Christian Magnanimity: A Sermon preached in the Cathedral-Church at *Worcester*, at the time of the Assizes, *Sept.* 21. 1690. upon 2 *Tim.* 1. 7.

A Sermon preached before the Queen at *White-Hall*, *March* 1. 169$\frac{0}{1}$. on *Luke* 6. 46.

A Sermon preached before the Queen at *White-Hall*, *March* 13. 169$\frac{1}{2}$. upon *Rom.* 8. 6.

The Mysteries of the Christian Faith Vindicated, in a Sermon preached at St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, *London*, *April* 7. 1691. upon 1 *Tim.* 1. 15.

A Sermon preached before the King and Queen at *White-Hall*, on *Christmas*-day, 1693. upon St. *John* 3. 17.

The Bishop of *Worcester*'s Charge to the Clergy of his Diocese, in his Primary Visitation, begun at *Worcester*, *Sept.* 11. 1698.

The Unreasonableness of a Separation from the New Bishops: Or a Treatise out of Ecclesiastial History. Shewing, That although a Bishop was unjustly deprived, neither He nor the Church ever made a Separation, if the Successor was not an Heretick. Translated out of an antient Greek Manuscript in the Publick Library at *Oxford*.

The Case of Sees Vacant, by an Unjust or Uncanonical Deprivation, stated: in Reply to a Treatise, entituled, *A Vindication of the Deprived Bishops*, &c. Together with the several Pamphlets lately published, as Answers to the *Baroccian* Treatise: both by *Humphrey Hody*, D. D. Fellow of *Wadham*-College in *Oxford*.

The Folly and Unreasonableness of Atheism demonstrated from the Advantage and Pleasure of a Religious Life; The Faculties of Humane Souls; The Structure of Animate Bodies, and the Origin and Frame of the World: in Eight Sermons, preached at the Lecture founded by the Honourable *Robert Boyle*, Esq; in the First Year 1692. by *Richard Bentley*, M. A. Chaplain to the Right Reverend Father in God, *Edward*, Lord Bishop of *Worcester*.

The End of the Catalogue.

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